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DISCLOSURE AUSTRALIA

NEWSLETTER SIXTEEN SEP 2004

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NEWSLETTER SIXTEEN

SEPTEMBER 2004

THE PROJECT INTERVIEWS HARRY TURNER

Introduction:

Over the months, as we have examined Government documents relating to the UFO phenomenon, a number of questions have passed through our minds. These included:

Was any scientific research conducted on the reports?

Out of all the individuals whose desks reports passed over, was anyone really interested in what lay behind the accounts?

The impression we have gained from comments on the RAAF's UFO policy file series 554/1/30 was that, for the most part, examining UFO reports was merely a job that had to be done:

"The investigation of Unidentified Flying Objects is understandably a tedious task and one in which the investigator may frequently have little faith or interest." (1)

"As you are probably aware the Department of Air is concerned solely with any possible threat to Australian security and does not go into detailed scientific investigation of UFO reports." (2)

"We spoke. While I agree with you in principle, the practicalities suggest we will continue to wear the responsibility. You should, however, ensure that the impact of this chore does not unduly impede our normal business." (3)

In his earlier research, Bill Chalker interviewed a former Government worker, by the name of Harry Turner, who had a serious interest in the topic. Turner's name crops up from time to time in documents on Government files in the Archives. Inquiries revealed that Turner was still alive and willing to be interviewed by the Disclosure Project. Therefore, in June of this year, Dominic McNamara and Bill Chalker spoke to Turner about his involvement.

Q. How did Harry become interested in the subject of "flying saucers/UFOs?"

He was undertaking research at Melbourne University in the field of nuclear physics and read a book by Donald Menzel, an astronomer at Harvard University in the U.S. Harry found the book to do an excellent job of exploring the

problem, but that the solutions Menzel offered in individual cases were at variance with the data provided on that case. This book steered Harry towards an interest in the subject. He then went to the other extreme and read a book by George Adamski. Harry felt that Adamski was confusing his experiences with “astral projection,” and couldn’t regard Adamski’s experiences as real.

A number of local cases then occurred. The first was in a suburb of Melbourne where a young man reported seeing an object with “passengers” in the “cabin.” The second report came from Dandenong, another Melbourne suburb. (4) These reports received attention in Melbourne newspapers, which Harry read.

Harry went to the RAAF Intelligence area and asked them what they were doing about these kinds of reports? Interesting, according to Harry, the RAAF told him that the day before they had been communicated with by the Secretary for the Department of Air who had asked them to “start giving answers” about the “flying saucer” reports that were coming in! RAAF intelligence asked Harry if he would like to become an investigator for them given his background. (5, 6) He agreed; the RAAF checked this out with the Department of Air who apparently upgraded his existing security clearance and even offered him expenses. He declined the expenses, believing this would allow him to remain more independent.

He went to work by investigating the sighting at Dandenong. He found that the newspapers had covered only a small part of the story, and there were in fact a series of witnesses and a series of sightings. The brother of one of the girls involved had found that the girl’s watch had stopped at the time of the observation and indeed was magnetised. The watch started running again after it was demagnetised. Harry interviewed the person who had checked the watch; and for the first time had found a piece of physical evidence associated with a flying saucer report.

At about this time, Harry says the Department of Transport measured the magnetic field of a fence the object was reportedly over. They measured the polarity of the fence posts-they are normally magnetised by the passing traffic –the posts being of alternate polarity. In the vicinity of the sighting, all fence posts were reported as aligned in one direction-which was abnormal. Here again was another piece of physical evidence.

Harry prepared a report on the Dandenong sightings. He found the family convincing and the sixteen year old female witness to be competent. While Harry did come across other civilian investigators of this case, he knew of no other “official” investigations.

Aside from investigating the local sightings, Harry was given two RAAF files on sightings and allowed to take them to the University to analyse. He studied the files, prepared a report and submitted this to the RAAF (7,8.)

Q. Were files of any other agencies shown to Harry?

Harry’s recollection was that he was not shown any other files than the ones provided by the RAAF.

Q. I understand that shortly after completing your report you travelled to the United Kingdom to work at Harwell. While in the UK did you conduct any research into UFOs?

Harry did not conduct any research into UFOs while in the U.K., but when there was put on to a NATO project and given honorary U.K. citizenship in order to do so. One day in 1956 an unusual notice appeared on a board at Harwell. It was outlining job opportunities for scientists to go to the States to work on anti-gravity research. The opinion of staff at Harwell was that this was odd, as we didn’t know what gravity itself was, let alone researching anti-gravity.

Harry was aware of details of the 1952 mass sightings over Washington-where the objects behaved as if they didn’t have any mass. His knowledge of radar systems made him think that the official explanation of temperature inversions was not correct. He therefore thought that perhaps the research into anti-gravity might have something to do with the Washington sightings. Harry understands that eventually this anti-gravity research money went into gravity research.

Q. In a letter dated March 1955 Peter Birch of the Directorate of Air Force Intelligence (DAFI) advised Harry that copies of his report were to go to Washington and London for comment. (9) We asked Harry if he recalled receiving

any official feedback about this referral?

He could not recollect receiving any official feedback on this. He did however later meet the Secretary of Air who recalled Harry's report. Harry was impressed that the Secretary for the Department of Air would recognise him.

Q. We understand that from 1956 to 1964 Harry was stationed at Maralinga in South Australia and asked him what was his role and did he conduct any UFO research while there?

Harry confirmed that he had indeed been stationed at Maralinga. The position he held was in charge of the Health Physics area with a role to ensure safety of staff, indigenous population and station owners. He did not conduct any UFO research while there. However, at one stage the range commander was a Dick Durant (phonetic spelling.) Harry learnt first hand from Durant that Durant had been an Army Attache in Washington at the time of the July 1952 mass sightings. On the second Saturday night of these events Durant had been in the radar room watching events unfold and was very impressed that the events were due to physical objects.

Q. In April 1957 the Director of DAFI wrote to the Director of the Joint Intelligence Bureau (JIB). DAFI asked if JIB would take over their role of collecting and investigating UFO reports. (10) We asked Harry if he had any personal knowledge of this?

Harry advised us that as he had not joined the JIB until 1964, he had no personal knowledge of this request or the response.

Q. We understand that in 1968 you were in the Directorate of Scientific and Technical Intelligence (DSTI) of the JIB. Also that you were the JIB liaison with DAFI concerning UFOs. Is this correct?

Harry confirmed that he was in the DSTI of the JIB in 1968. He was the (unofficial) liaison point between JIB and DAFI on the subject of UFOs.

Q. Was JIB officially involved in any kind of research on the topic of UFOs? If so, what?

JIB was "pretty cold" to the whole idea of UFOs and felt that they didn't want to get involved in something so insubstantial. Harry didn't have opposition to his involvement in the subject, but he didn't have official support either. He was not aware of any other official Government investigation of UFOs, other than DAFI. Directors of DAFI came and went, and at least one Director considered that the subject was a nuisance, taking up time better spent on other matters and something DAFI would like to get rid of. It seemed to Harry that DAFI didn't want to loose the role, but they didn't want to do anything about it either. Down at the lower levels; of Squadron Leader and Wing Commander, Harry felt that these officers couldn't afford to become too enthusiastic about incoming reports. He felt that when they received a report they looked for a simple explanation-they didn't want to go out and investigate a case-but also didn't want anyone else to do the work for them.

Q. We understand that in 1969 there was a proposal for a rapid investigation team within the DSTI.

We understand that four other people had a part in this proposed Team. We believe they were:

Dr John Morton from ANU

Dr John Symonds from the Australian Atomic Energy Commission

Dr Michael Duggin from the National Standards Laboratory CSIRO

Mr George Barlow of Defence Science and Technology

Can you tell us about this please?

Harry told us he was the instigator of the idea. A request was made to the Secretary of Defence, who referred it on to DAFI. DAFI reacted badly against it and it was rejected.

Symonds was an old friend of Harry's from the early days, who was interested but not directly involved. He was on the

fringe of interest in the subject.

Mike Duggin was the other main player with Harry. Together they had investigated a reported UFO landing on a Sydney golf course. (11). They took samples and looked at what temperature would have been required to make the marks/holes. From memory Harry thought hotter than an oxy-acetylene torch would have been needed. Harry and Mike went there privately to investigate and interviewed the green keeper who had found the marks. Harry thought it was quite a convincing case.

George Barlow was the number two man in Defence Science. He had an intellectual interest in the subject of UFOs and had read on the subject. He thought there was something to it which needed to be investigated.

DAFI rejected the idea, so it was dropped by DSTI.

Q. Did you see any serious level of interest inside the Australian Government about UFOs?

No. When Prof Allen Hynek came out from the USA, Harry and Hynek went to interview O'Farrell, in 1973. (12) All this was done via the back door. People didn't want to be involved due to potential risk to their careers. Harry said that it was the first time that O'Farrell had openly talked about his personal sighting in 1954.

Q. Did you ever come across JIB UFO files?

Harry was in JIB between 1964 and 1982 and did not see any such files.

Q. We understand that in 1969 you participated in the investigation of a radar UFO case in Kalamunda. Can you tell us about this please?

This was a key issue in Harry being "expunged" from his liaison link with DAFI. The UFO investigator at Pearce RAAF base in Perth was overloaded in investigating local cases. Harry says this officer was lacking support from above and spending his own time investigating local reports. The officer sent in a request for assistance and Harry was sent to Perth to help. The two of them investigated a number of WA cases. The radar/visual case from Kalamunda (13) was one of these. This radar was situated on a hill top and had a moving target indicator, this meant that no stationary objects should show on the radar screen. However, on one occasion a stationary object was picked up on the radar. It was also seen by people on the ground. One of the radar operators who saw it on the screen called his wife who looked up and saw the object. Harry interviewed the woman; her son and the crew in the radar room and wrote up a report. Another radar report from the Guildford (WA) airport was found to be caused by a wireless mast.

Harry's report recommended that more be done to investigate UFO cases, which DAFI did not like.

Q. Could you please describe the UFO incident or incidents which most interested you?

One of the cases which impressed Harry was the Cressy, Tasmania, Reverend Browning event. He felt that the RAAF's response to Browning's observation was bad. He was pleased when the report went up to high circles and someone up there knew the Cressy witness personally and asked for a full report from DAFI which caused a RAAF officer (Waller?) to go and talk to the witness.

A radar/visual case at Woomera most impressed him, (see full details in Disclosure Australia Project Newsletter three) although he added that he did not conduct a personal investigation on this one, but drew his information from RAAF files. This was the case where the velocity of the object had exceeded any aircraft of the day. He recalled it involved a Canberra bomber and he thought the "G" range. An aircraft came in at 30,000 feet and dropped a bomb which was tracked on radar until impact. He recalled the object had been at 60,000 feet and deduced from the fact that its angular size was the same as the aircraft, had to have been twice the aircraft's size. As the aircraft dropped its bomb the object accelerated away. The aircraft crew saw nothing.

Q. Did you ever come across a USAF "Report 14?"

Yes. Report 14 was published in two versions. Version one was a military version and was complete. Version two was a public version with some sections deleted. Harry had access to the military version (14). Harry said he was impressed with an analysis of the experience of the observer versus the quality of the data they provided. The report said that the more experience you had as an observer the less an investigator could find a loop hole and a conventional explanation. He felt this went contrary to the official view that the “unexplained” cases in files were due to the low quality of the observers. If the observers provided more data, then investigators would be more likely to find a mundane explanation. Report 14 showed the opposite. Harry said he wrote a JIB report on “Report 14” pointing out that this line of argument was faulty.

Q. In JIB did you ever review documents on UFOs from other world governments?

Through DSTI’s connection with the UK, Harry Turner in JIB got copies of material from the UK, but not a great deal. He recalled that the Report 14 document came through to the Joint Intelligence Bureau. Harry also wrote a critique of the US Condon report for the Joint Intelligence Organisation (JIO) (JIB changed its name to JIO in 1969), pointing out that the summary and bulk of the report were contradictory.

Notes:

- (1) National Archives of Australia: A703, 554/1/30 Part 2. Memo 1 Mar 68. CAS to HQOC & HQSC.
- (2) National Archives of Australia: A703, 554/1/30 Part 2. Memo. 6 Dec 68. DAFI to HQSC.
- (3) National Archives of Australia: A703, 554/1/30 Part 3. Memo. 26 May 1981.
- (4). National Archives of Australia: A705, 114/1/197. Pages 130-134 are a typed report on the East Dandenong sightings.
- (5) National Archives of Australia: A705, 114/1/197. Page 162. Letter from Harry Turner dated 30 July 1954 to the Secretary, Department of Air offering his services.
- (6) National Archives of Australia: A705, 114/1/197. Page 161. Letter from the Secretary, Department of Air dated 5 Aug 1954 to Harry Turner, accepting the offer of his assistance.
- (7) National Archives of Australia: A705, 114/1/197. Letter from Harry Turner dated 13 Jan 1955 to “Terry” – submitting his hand written report.
- (8) National Archives of Australia: A703, 554/1/30 Part 1. Covering letter dated 29 Mar 1955 from Peter Birch of DAFI to Harry Turner, together with a typed copy of Turner’s report.
- (9) National Archives of Australia: A705, 114/1/197. Page 9. Letter dated 18 Apr 1955 from Harry Turner to Squadron Leader Birch.
- (10) National Archives of Australia: A703, 554/1/30 Part 1. Memo 1 Apr 57 from Group Captain Henderson DAFI to Director, Joint Intelligence Bureau.
- (11) The RAAF investigated a report of a trace on a golf course in 1969 details are as follows:

Jun 1969 St Michaels Golf Club La Perouse NSW Trace

Unusual ground marks discovered 0800hrs. Not there night before. When discovered grass of course had heavy dew but no evidence of footprints or tyre tracks. Assistant green keeper noted an “oily residue” which had gone by the time RAAF investigators visited on 25 Jun 69. RAAF “Could have been the work of a clever hoaxter, but it would have been a very difficult job...”

pp42-44 of 580/1/1 part 12.

(12) The AURA summary of file 554/1/30 Part 3 indicates that pages 49-50 are two copies of the same typed file note of record of discussions on 24 Aug 1973 between Prof A Hynek; Dr M Duggin and Mr O Turner.

(13) National Archives of Australia: A703, 580/1/1 Part 11 contains the following details:

23 May 69 Kalamunda WA RV

At 1101,1108,1115,1118,1136 & 1142z, ATC radar-strong stationary point 300 deg 9NM from Kalamunda. Seen at same time as object like a "big street light" reported over Cloverdale by a Mrs Cosgrove. Radar returns were strong-stationary. Met. Radar at Perth also had unusual returns but times/dates did not tally with above. Return from this latter radar could have been due to inversion over OTC antennas on ground.

Mrs Cosgrove 1835hrs (1035z) of Cloverdale WA. Blue/white light, with red light on top from SE 12 deg el. Very fast but slow at other times. Stopped overhead for 15mins then left at speed to N.

pp238-241 of 580/1/1 part 11.

(14) National Australia Archive: A703, 554/1/30 Part 1. Page 191 of 554/1/30 part 1 is a note from "R & P Branch Joint Intelligence Bureau." 25 Feb 1960. "DAFI...the following material is forwarded for perusal and return. US Air Technical Intelligence (unreadable word) 'Special Report No 14. Analysis of Reports on Unidentified Flying Objects. Forwarded on loan at request JIB Rep, Canberra ref JIB rep Canberra Teleprinter K189 of 22 Feb 60.'" As Turner joined JIB only in 1964, this rep was not Turner.

RAAF file series 580/1/1

As requested by us, the NAA have just made digital copies available of parts 13,16,17,18 19 & 20 of this series, on its web site. We have commenced work on summarising and cataloguing these parts and will report on them in due course.

Waiting, waiting!

Most of our requests to have previously "Not yet examined" files in the NAA examined, have been speedily meet. However, others do take time.

Two files we have asked to be examined are:

File name \ Series \ Control \ Date range \ Status \ Location

Unusual sightings-incidents

E1327

5/4/AIR PART 1

1960-1968

With held pending agency advice. 29/3/04

Darwin

Maritime and air incidents/contacts

E1327

5/3/Air Part 1

1966-1992

With held pending agency advice. 29/3/04

Darwin

These have so far taken 4-5 months of processing and are still not available.

Normal NAA status classifications for files are “Open”; “Open with exception”; “closed”, or “Not yet examined.” The status of the above two files is “With held pending agency advice.” Both appear from the file numbers to be RAAF Darwin files. We await them becoming “open” with interest, as the only Darwin file so far located was:

File name

Series

Control

Date range

Status

Location

Unidentified Flying Object sightings

E499

C21/4/4

25 Aug 1959-2 Apr 1974

Open

Darwin

Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOT) UFO related files

One of the players in the early days of the UFO phenomenon in Australia, was the Federal Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) (whose role now sits in the Department of Transport and Regional Services.) There are numerous references to DCA files on documents we have viewed on RAAF UFO files. Some files, such as DCA 492/1/411 and 21/1/387 cover a multiple year date range.

So far, in the NAA we have come across only two DCA files on RecordSearch. These are:

File name

Series

Control

Date range

Status

Location

Reports on “Flying Saucers” and strange sky lights {Department of Civil Aviation, New South Wales}

C273

1957/619

1954-1960

Open

New South Wales

Air Safety Investigation-Investigations of reports on unidentified flying objects-procedures (2 pages)

J23

1970/3877 PART 1

1967-1967

Open

Brisbane

We have therefore recently taken two actions relative to potential DOT UFO files:

An FOI request has been forwarded to the DOT asking for copies of all documents held relating to UFOs. In addition we have asked for any documents relating to their current policy when a UFO sighting is reported to the Department. A letter has been despatched to the NAA asking them to check if they hold ten nominated DCA files whose numbers we located, and if they are held, if copies can be made.

We will keep you posted on the outcome.

RAAF FOI number 2 request

Following our inspection of RAAF UFO files at RAAF Base Edinburgh, our subsequent request for photocopies of a small number of papers on these files, has been granted. We await their arrival.

Feedback and research

The documents we have examined and published details of so far, have started to stimulate others to comment or conduct their own further research. For example, one Australian researcher is now examining the 1938 Darwin “unidentified aircraft” saga; a recent enquiry from England asked us for the current Australian Government policy on UFOs; and two more witnesses to the 1966 CE2 Westall event have contacted us with their own accounts. This is a very encouraging development.

The recent ABC TV documentary on the “British X-files” was based, in part, on research into the official archives in the U.K. If you are interested in learning more about the U.K. archival experience then essential reading is the book “Out of the shadows: UFOs, the establishment and the official cover up” (written by David Clarke and Andy Roberts, it was published in 2002 by Judy Piatkus of London ISBN 07499 22907. Copies may still be available through some book shops.) The subsequent discussion of this program on the AUFORN list revealed a lively debate on the contents of this program, further indicating the value of archival research.

We would however, be the first to admit that examining documents is but one step along the trail. As pointed out by members of UFOR(QLD) an essential part of the work is to fully analyse the material uncovered. We would therefore urge all who read this Newsletter to play their part in the analysis process by engaging in discussion on the contents of the Government’s UFO archive material and conducting and publishing their own research findings.

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